

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MONROV 01134 141311Z

41

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EUR-12 ARA-06 IO-11 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01

AID-05 IGA-02 TRSE-00 /084 W
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FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9029

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 1134

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AO, LI

SUBJECT: LIBERIA RECONGIZES MPLA AS LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT OF
ANGOLA

REF: MONROVIA 1129

1. AT 4:30 P.M FEBRUARY 13 I RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM THE CHIEF OF PROTOCOL ASKING ME TO MEET WITH FOREIGN MINISTER DENNIS AT 5:00 P.M I ASSUMED THAT THIS WAS THE MEETING DENNIS AND I HAD BEEN TRYING TO ARRANGE FOR NEARLY TWO DAYS (MONROVIA 1052, MONROVIA 1088, MONROVIA 1116), TO REVIEW BIDDING ON ANGOLA AND DISCUSS FELLI VISIT. WHEN I ARRIVED DENNIS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THIS HAD BEEN INTENDED PURPOSE FOR OUR GETTING TOGETHER. THEN HE SAID HE HAD QTE A MORE GRAVE MATTER UNQTE TO DISCUSS WITH ME. HE THEN HANDED ME A COPY OF TELEGRAM FROM GOL EMBASSY IN ADDIS ABABA WHICH CONTAINED TEXT OF OAU SECGEN'S TELEGRAM TO MPLA PRESIDENT NETO INFORMING HIM OF ANGOLA'S ADMISSION TO OAU WITH MPLA RECOGNIZED AS GOVERNMENT BASED ON RECOGNITION OF MPLA GOVERNMENT BY SIMPLE MAJORITY OF OAU MEMBERS.

2. DENNIS THEN PROCEEDED TO TELL ME THAT PRESIDENT TOLBERT HAD QTE DISMISSED UNQTE HIM FROM ONGOING SPECIAL CABINET MEETING WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO INFORM ME IN ADVANCE OF PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT THAT
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 MONROV 01134 141311Z

GOL WAS RECOGNIZING MPLA GOVERNMENT IN ANGOLA. DENNIS STATED

THAT GOL'S POSITION VIS-A-VIS ANGOLA HAD NOT CHANGED BUT IT HAD TO FACE THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION. THIRTY OAU MEMBERS HAD RECONGIZED MPLA AND GOL BELIEVED OTHERS WERE LIKELY FOLLOW SUIT. THUS "IMPORTANT QUESTION" TACTIC NO LONGER VIABLE. IN THIS LIGHT, IF LIBERIA WENT TO CM MEETING ON FEBRUARY 23 AS A HOLDOUT, IT WOULD QTE LOOK FOOLISH UNQTE AND NOT HAVE CREDIBILITY. THEREFORE, CABINET HAD DECIDED RECOGNITION AT THIS TIME WAS ESSENTIAL. IN ADDITION, IN VIEW OF THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND IN ANGOLA, RECOGNITION WAS THE ONLY WAY GOL COULD CREDIBLY USE ITS INFLUENCE TO BRING ABOUT QTE CEASEFIRE AND END THE KILLING OF OUR BROTHERS IN ANGOLA UNQTE. DENNIS SAID GOL WOULD CONTINUE TO WORK FOR IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET AND CUBAN FORCES IN ANGOLA.

3. I REITERATED USG POSITION ON ANGOLA REMINDING DENNIS OF MY JANUARY 21 DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT TOLBERT AND MY SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATIONS WITH HIM (DENNIS). I SUGGESTED THAT GOL RECOGNITION MIGHT BE PREMATURE IN LIGHT OF (WHAT I THEN THOUGHT WAS SUCCESSFUL) NIGERIAN COUP, THE THOUGHT BEING THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT MIGHT REVERSE MURTALA'S POSITION AND OTHER OAU MEMBERS MIGHT FOLLOW ITS LEAD. DENNIS REJECTED THIS SAYING HE DOUBTED THAT THE NEW FMG WOULD REVERSE AND IN LIGHT OF OAU SECGEN'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF RECOGNITION GOL COULD NOT AFFORD TAKE RISK OF BEING CAUGHT OUT IN LEFT FIELD. HE SAID QTE WE HAVE TO LIVE ON THE AFRICAN CONTINENT AND MUST DEAL WITH ANGOLA IN THIS CONTEXT UNQTE. HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT GOL FULLY UNDERSTANDS USG POSITION AND CONGRESSIONAL PROBLEMS VIS-A-VIS ANGOLA. GOL KNOWS THAT EXECUTIVE BRANCH WANTED AND TRIED TO DO QTE THE RIGHT THING UNQTE BUT THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH HAVING FAILED TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS, AFRICAN STATES WHOSE POSITIONS ON ANGOLA WERE CONGRUENT WITH USG'S HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO FACE THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION.

4. I ASKED DENNIS TO THANK PRESIDENT TOLBERT FOR INFORMING ME IN ADVANCE OF PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT, EXPRESSED REGRET FOR GOL'S DECISION AND SUGGESTED WE COULD EXPECT SITUATIONS SIMILAR TO ANGOLA TO DEVELOP IN SPANISH SAHARA, THE AFARS AND THE ISSAS AND OTHER CONTENTIOUS AFRICAN AREAS IF THE OAU MODERATES DID NOT STAND FIRM. HE RESPONDED THAT MODERATES NEEDED SUPPORT OF USG AND IT APPEARED CONGRESS WAS NOT GOING TO PERMIT EXECUTIVE CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MONROV 01134 141311Z

BRANCH TO PROVIDE THAT SUPPORT. I SUGGESTED THAT IF THE MODERATES HAD EXERCISED THEIR INFLUENCE WITH THE CONGRESS EARLIER AND MORE AGGRESSIVELY WE MIGHT NOT BE FACED WITH THE SITUATION HE HAD JUST DESCRIBED. HE AGREED AND SAID HE WOULD TRY TO GET THAT MESSAGE ACROSS AT THE FORTHCOMING CM MEETING.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH I WAS SURPRISED BY THE TIMING OF THE DECISION, I WAS NOT RPT NOT SURPRISED BY THE DECISION ITSELF. DENNIS

HAS TOLD ME AND OTHERS REPEATEDLY THAT WHEN IT COMES TO THE CRUNCH ON MAJOR OAU ISSUES GOL BELIEVES IT MUST END UP ON THE SIDE OF THE MAJORITY AND MUST NOT BE THE LAST GOVERNMENT TO JOIN THE RANKS, ISRAELI DE-RECOGNITION BEING AN EXAMPLE. I BELIEVE THAT THE PURPOSE OF INFORMING ME IN THE MANNER HE DID WAS TO SOLICIT USG UNDERSTANDING OF GOL'S DILEMMA. I WOULD HOPE THAT OUR REACTION, IF ANY, WILL NOT RPT NOT BE PUNITIVE. END COMMENT.

6. WHILE DRAFTING THIS MESSAGE, I RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM DENNIS INFORMING ME THAT HE WAS DRAFTING A NOTE TO ME TRANSMITTING A LETTER FROM PRESIDENT TOLBERT TO PRESIDENT FORD, EXPLAINING TOLBERT'S DECISION. I WILL CALL ON DENNIS AT 1330 GMT TODAY TO RECEIVE THE NOTE. TEXT WILL BE SENT AS SOON AS I RECEIVE IT.
BEAN

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